Minnesota

MINNESOTA'S STATE PLAN FOCUSES ON children with high needs, targeting grant activities on poverty, the broadest category of need, including children from birth to kindergarten entry who are from families living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty rate. The state's Kindergarten Entry Assessment has repeatedly found that family household income, above all other variables, is a predictor of school readiness. Furthermore, children who are otherwise in need of special assistance and support who are also living in poverty experience multiple challenges and therefore warrant the greatest attention. Strategies to improve the school readiness of children with high needs include investing in the communities where they live, improving the quality of places where they learn, empowering their families to make choices, focusing evidence-based professional development on the adults who care for them, and providing meaningful data to inform decisionmaking for the public and its policymakers.

Specific focus areas in the State Plan include the following:

- **Early Learning Challenge Target Communities:** High-need urban and rural communities in Minneapolis, St. Paul, the White Earth Reservation, and Itasca County will receive full implementation of the State Plan, leveraging existing resources, enhancing current efforts in workforce development and parent engagement, and increasing capacity to serve children with high needs.

- **Building Quality and Ensuring Access to Quality:** The State Plan will use Parent Aware, Minnesota's existing tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS), to improve the quality of early learning programs by creating incentives and supports for early learning programs to be rated. Workforce training incentives and supports will increase the credentials of early childhood educators, and

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Total Federal Award
$44,858,313

Grant Period
January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2015

The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) discretionary grant program supports states in building statewide systems that raise the quality of early learning and development programs and increase access to high-quality programs for children with high needs, so that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Information in this abstract is drawn from the state's RTT-ELC grant application.

programs and educators will be trained to choose and effectively use assessments to guide children's growth and development.

- **Establishing Governance and Accountability:** Minnesota's governance structure will clarify leadership and leverage joint-agency coordination to focus on shared goals. It will also enable focused and regular communication about the progress of the State Plan between state leadership and local communities.

Minnesota addressed the following Focused Investment Areas in its application:

Early Learning and Development Standards

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards. Minnesota will bolster its existing early learning and development standards for children birth to age 5 in order to ensure that parents and early learning programs are focused on a common set of developmentally appropriate expectations.

Comprehensive Assessment System

(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of comprehensive assessment systems. Investment in the existing comprehensive assessment system will provide early learning programs and early childhood educators with the necessary tools for monitoring and supporting children's development.

Establish Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework

(D)(1) Developing a workforce knowledge and competence framework and a progression of credentials. Minnesota has a professional development system that includes a workforce development and competency framework and an aligned progression of credentials and degrees. The State Plan will focus investment on strengthening that system.

Support Workforce Improvement

(D)(2) Supporting early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Minnesota will build on its existing system by using its strong professional development infrastructure to make significant investments in the human capital of early childhood educators.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment

(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry. Minnesota has an existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment; grant funds will improve its scope and accuracy.

Build or Enhance Data Systems

(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. Data linkages across state agencies will provide actionable information that is specifically related to early learning and development services and outcomes.

Minnesota has 142,553 children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families. The state reports that it is leveraging $60,232,811 in other funding sources to support this effort.